

promise, Sejong issued an edict, composed by himself and citing precedents from Korean and Chinese history, in which he decreed that henceforth the crown prince would handle all but major decisions for the last half of every month, and that his ministers would all assemble and swear their loyalty to the crown prince. This edict hit the court like a shock, unleashing all the pressures that had been building since 1437. Protests flowed in from all agencies of the government. The personnel of the six administrative departments closed their offices and marched in a body to the palace. Memorials and protests arrived in a flood. What was new, and intolerable to the officials, was that the crown prince would actually preside at court. This involved extremely complicated issues of precedent and ceremonial. The very relationship between lord (*kun*) and liege (*sin*), at the inner core of Confucian concern, was at stake. But now it was Sejong's turn to be implacable. Each memorial was no sooner presented than it was denied, in spite of the fact that many of the protests were reasonable enough in raising the fundamental problems that would flow from the division of royal power.

The king's determination now set the stage for a compromise along the lines originally proposed, even though the actual effecting of the plan involved two more years of haggling. Finally, in June of 1445, the crown prince began officially to handle routine administrative affairs. The drain all of this had caused on Sejong's already poor health can be imagined, as can the tensions that had been created in the relationship between king and court.

The last years of this controversy overlapped the period – roughly 1442 to 1446 – when Sejong was working intensively on his alphabet. Inevitably, that too would become a matter of bitter debate, not least because the king had assigned certain administrative details concerning alphabetic research and publication to the Office of

Deliberation (*üisa ch'öng*), the very same organ that, under the crown prince, would decide the so-called "minor affairs."